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CIA: A Victim of the War

POPULAR MYTHOLOGY, especially in liberal quarters, invariably casts the Central Intelligence Agency in a villainous role in Vietnam. But in fact, the CIA has consistently been the most objective organization functioning out there—particularly in assessing the political realities of the war.

In other words, the CIA has been generally telling it like it is rather than dishing up optimistic reports calculated to please and appease the Establishment in Saigon and Washington.

For that reason, the agency has incurred the envy of State Department officials, the wrath of senior American military officers and something less than full White House support. And, as a consequence, its pres-

ence in Vietnam has been gradually reduced.

There are virtually no CIA men now working at the district and village levels. Instead, the estimated 50 agency operatives currently stationed outside Saigon are assigned mainly to provincial headquarters, where their jobs are largely ritualistic.

The program designed to identify and uproot the Vietcong political network in the countryside, known as Operation Phoenix, has been taken out of CIA hands and put under U.S. military auspices. So has the training of the Saigon government's so-called "revolutionary development" cadres.

WHETHER these programs would have fared better under the CIA is a matter of doubt, since South Vietnamese officials both in Saigon and in rural areas either disregard the importance of the Communists' political infrastructure or are bitterly making local accommodations with the enemy.

But as run by the American military, pacification appears to be making little real headway.

One of the CIA techniques that has never quite satisfied the Establishment has been a tendency to produce qualitative intelligence—-anecdotal, descriptive information often too fuzzy to be fed into computers. The Pentagon, in contrast, prefers statistics that can adorn graphs and flip-charts.

In the opinion of many Vietnam specialists, it was the military's quantitative approach that repeatedly created the illusory impression the war was being won.

The military has also tended to paint a rosy picture of the Vietnam situation in order to bulwark its claims to have registered significant battlefield gains. With less need to justify itself, the CIA has tried to be more level in its appraisals.

A GOOD EXAMPLE of the kind of frustrations the CIA has encountered was described by Neil Sheehan in a recent New York Times dispatch disclosing that the agency had been rebuffed in its attempts to warn the President that more than 30,000 Communist agents have infiltrated various

South Vietnamese government departments.

Though White House sources confirmed the existence of the CIA document, they dismissed it as exaggerated and "overly pessimistic"—apparently because it differed from the more optimistic accounts assuring the President that his policies are resulting in progress.

Similarly, studies undertaken with CIA field participation in two key South Vietnamese provinces not long ago have reportedly been shelved because their findings failed to substantiate military affirmations that the Vietcong in those places have been put out of action.

According to these classified studies, Vietcong political activists are still very much alive in those provinces, even though they have been compelled by increased Saigon government activity to operate more covertly at the present time.

The studies estimate, therefore, that the Communists could make a considerable showing in the two provinces even in a free election if they had eight or nine months during a cease-fire in which to reassemble their apparatus and resume their efforts to influence the local population.

IMPLICIT in this investigation is the suggestion that President Nguyen Van Thieu's Saigon regime is at its strongest point at the moment, and might perform well were a political settlement initiated quickly.

Moreover, the studies recommend that preparations be made for such a settlement by strengthening the regime's village political structures and, among other things, eliminating the ludicrous quota system under which government officials are required to arrest a designated number of Communist suspects each month.

Judging from the fate of these studies, both Washington and Saigon are evidently still persuaded that guns rather than negotiations are the answer in Vietnam. So instead of being hailed as a hero, as in the fable, the little boy who honestly declared the emperor to be naked is being administered a swift kick in the pants.

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Vietnam

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NEW YORK TIMES

DATE

PAGE 1

Expert Now Gloomy In Report to Nixon On Vietcong Power

By TAD SZULC

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Dec. 2—Sir Robert Thompson, the British expert on guerrilla warfare, has told President Nixon that the United States and allied intelligence and police efforts have failed to destroy the Communist subversive apparatus in South Vietnam.

His report, submitted in writing to the President at an unpublicized White House meeting on Oct. 13, appears to be in marked contrast with the relatively optimistic views on the security situation in South Vietnam that Sir Robert offered Mr. Nixon last December.

Sir Robert's findings — outlined to The New York Times today by Administration officials familiar with the report — were based on a new five-week secret mission he undertook in South Vietnam at President Nixon's request during September and October before coming to Washington to deliver his report.

The previous mission for Mr.

Continued on Page 9, Column 1

Nixon, which also lasted five weeks, was completed last Dec. 3, when he met with the President.

In his policy speech on Vietnam on Dec. 15, Mr. Nixon told of the Thompson mission, described his findings as "cautiously optimistic," and quoted him as reporting that, "I was very impressed by the improvement in the military and political situation in Vietnam as compared with all previous visits and especially in the security situation, both in Saigon and the rural areas."

Sir Robert's recent mission, however, as well as the existence of his October report



Associated Newspapers

Sir Robert Thompson

has been kept secret, reportedly because his new conclusions seem to question the validity of the pacification and Vietnamization programs, including Operation Phoenix, which has been described as a code name for a secret Central Intelligence Agency operation that led to the alleged massacre at My Lai March 16, 1968.

On Oct. 14, the day after he conferred with President Nixon, Sir Robert discussed the Vietnam situation at a meeting of high level military officers and Defense Department and intelligence officials, paraphrasing in replies to questions the key points contained in his report to the President.

The main theme of Sir Robert's findings was that despite some successes in pacification, particularly in the performance by newly elected officials in South Vietnamese villages, there has been a general failure in police and intelligence efforts aimed at eliminating Vietcong apparatus in the country.

The Thompson report was said to have emphasized that success in other aspects of pacification cannot solve the basic political problem in Vietnam after the withdrawal of the bulk of American forces so long as the Vietcong apparatus remains virtually intact.

Despite continuing Administration optimism over pacification, as expressed in public statements, there are officials here with extensive experience in Vietnam who privately not only share Sir Robert's new conclusions but also argue that the South Vietnamese political and security situation is so fragile as to pose a critical threat to the Saigon Government even in the presence of "residual" American combat forces.

Follows Earlier Assessment

Sir Robert's report followed an earlier assessment given to President Nixon by the Central Intelligence Agency that more than 30,000 Communist agents had been infiltrated into the Saigon Government, including the office of President Nguyen Van Thieu.

When The New York Times published on Oct. 19 an article based on the C.I.A. report, White House officials said that it exaggerated the extent of the infiltration and was "overly pessimistic." These comments were made, however, five days after the submission of the Thompson report declaring the allied antisubversive program to be "inadequate."

The responsibility for eradicating the underground Vietcong apparatus is vested in an agency known as Civil Operations Support, or CORDS, an arm of the United States military command in Saigon. CORDS works in cooperation with the South Vietnamese military intelligence and national police.

The American agency's main antisubversive instrument is the highly controversial Operation Phoenix, composed of South Vietnamese police and military and intelligence agents, United States civilian and military personnel and operatives of the Central Intelligence Agency, who play a key role in the whole operation.

Sir Robert was said to have reported, however, that the three-year-old Operation Phoenix and related activities were not doing "their job" and had failed to break up the enemy's main effort in South Vietnam.

Other intelligence sources said that Operation Phoenix itself was infiltrated by Vietcong agents.

Officials familiar with Sir Robert's conclusions said that he was much less optimistic over the worldwide aspects of the Vietnam situation than he was last year. Asked at the Pentagon meeting when the United States could leave Vietnansified Communist shelling installations appeared to bear "not right away."

WASHINGTON CLOSE-UP

CIA Is a Masterful Entangler

By FRANK GETLEIN

You can always count on the CIA to come to the rescue when things look glum.

Back in the Kennedy administration, it looked as if the tyrant Castro would hold Cuba in his grip forever. But the CIA devised the Bay of Pigs invasion, the Cuban people rose, as predicted, to welcome the counter-insurgents, and Cuba has been peacefully democratic and pro-American ever since, as is well known.

Earlier still, the intelligence community and the military community were shaken by the possibility of peace breaking out at a meeting between Eisenhower and Khrushchev. Again, the CIA rushed in, dispatched a U-2 spy plane over Russia, lied to the President so that he would, in effect, lie to Khrushchev about it, and in no time at all the dread threat of peace was laid to rest for the remainder of the Eisenhower years.

Now the spooks have done it again and just in the nick.

For some months now, those same communities have been worried about Richard Nixon. The ancient anti-Communist warrior, the man who exposed Alger Hiss and thus saved China from going Red, the man who exposed Helen Gahagan Douglas and thus saved Hollywood from going Red, that valiant crusader seemed himself to be going soft on the commies.

He was talking about peace in Vietnam and about letting the South Vietnamese government do its own fighting with its own troops. He was sounding like a regular Fulbright or even an Aiken; he was just lucky Vice President Agnew didn't hear about his new soft-

ness: It would have been all up with Nixon, a natural nattering nabob, if ever there was one.

Month by dreary month, the troops began coming home, with loose talk about another 40,000 out by Christmas and the whole crowd, perhaps, out by next year sometime. If that happens, there goes the war. Spooks can't be expected to fight it themselves; they need troops.

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At just that dark hour, the CIA composed a report for the President, and it may well be the thing that will turn the tide. The South Vietnamese government — our guys — said the CIA, has been infiltrated by 30,000 enemy agents. The newcomers are mostly Cong rather than Northerners; they are all over the police and the army; and they are so efficient that none of them above the rank of lance-corporal has been apprehended.

That last note is particularly important. It anticipates and rejects the understandable desire of the President or the press to have a look at some of the 30,000. If one could not be produced, the untrusting might have concluded that was because they don't exist. Now everyone knows in advance it's because the 30,000 Cong infiltrators are smarter than the Thieu-Ky democratic government and also smarter than the CIA itself, which can count the infiltrators but can't lay a hand on them.

The report, filed last May but leaked to the press only last week, contends that the Cong made a strategic shift as a result of American and South Vietnamese victories in

the field and determined to win by infiltration what they could not by arms. Clearly, the report concludes, once the Americans are entirely out of South Vietnam, the country is a goner for the cause of freedom so well served by the two military men now in charge.

The real conclusion is that Vietnamization will have to be abandoned, for every acre of ground we turn over to our gallant democratic allies we are, for all we know, really turning over to the Cong infiltrators.

Therefore, back to the boon-docks, you Yankee fighting men, and enough of this pusillanimous palaver about pulling out, you puerile presslords and pussyfooting professors.

Having charted this mass move of the enemy from the field to the bureaux, the CIA will surely be able to reverse the alarm should that become necessary. If we keep our troops in Vietnam now in order to protect the South Vietnamese government from the South Vietnamese government, eventually, no doubt, the CIA will learn to catch the infiltrators they now can only count. Once more, the Americans will begin to hope for peace in our time, or perhaps our children's time, or at any rate some time.

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And once more, the CIA will file a report: Discouraged by the cleansing of the government — or purges — conducted by Thieu and Ky, the Viet Cong will pull its infiltrators back to the combat zones and the Americans will have to stick around to fight them.

With proper adjustment, there is no reason in the world the war can't last forever.

Forced Plunge From Copter To Coerce VC Is Described

By Bernard D. Nossiter
Washington Post Staff Writer

A former Army intelligence agent yesterday said he had twice witnessed Vietnamese thrown to their deaths from Marine helicopters in order to extract information from suspected Vietcong supporters.

The veteran, Kenneth B. Osborn, 26, said that the two victims were pushed out from 200 to 300 feet above the ground in the spring of 1968 over an uninhabited region 15 miles north of Danang.

He spoke out at the second day of a mock tribunal being staged here by an anti-war group, the National Veterans' Inquiry into U.S. War Crimes Policy. The organization has put on similar affairs in 13 other cities but this was the first time that Osborn appeared.

The Pentagon has said it is investigating all allegations of atrocities. Yesterday, a spokesman said that the Military Assistance Command-Vietnam opened an inquiry several months ago into charges that a Vietnamese was hurled from a helicopter. The spokesman, however, did not know whether this examination, still under way, involves the incidents described by Osborn.

Osborn, a native of Baltimore, is a graduate student at American University and now lives at 5205 Sherrier Place,

NW. He outlined his story at the inquiry's public session and then filled in more details for reporters who questioned him more than two hours. He was direct and circumstantial about some matters, but on others he was either deliberately vague or said he could not recall.

This is the essence of Osborn's account:

To avoid the draft, he enlisted in 1966 and volunteered for intelligence. At his training course in Fort Holabird, Md., an intelligence colonel warned students at an orientation lecture that they must make a "moral" decision about staying in a field requiring illegal acts. Only one man, not Osborn, left.

He arrived in Vietnam in September, 1967, and was assigned to the 525th Intelligence Group, First Battalion.

His account continued:

Osborne was sent to Danang where he posed as a Defense Department civilian and established networks embracing 40 to 50 Vietnamese agents. He passed his information on to Marine units stationed there, but complained that he was being disregarded. This, he feared, would also endanger the expense money he was being provided for his agents.

To "prove I was being effectively used," Osborn was invited by a Marine first lieutenant

to observe at first hand the questioning of a suspected Vietcong sympathizer who had been identified by Osborn's network.

He will not name the Marine, but describes him as a former non-commissioned officer in his late thirties, the chief of a Counter Intelligence Interrogation Team for the III Marine Amphibious Force.

Osborn, the officer, two or three Marine enlisted men serving as guards, a Marine pilot and co-pilot took off in a Sikorsky helicopter from Danang in March or April 1968. Their passengers were the suspect, a man in his twenties from the village of Phuong-doe, and the prospective victim, a man in his early thirties. Both had their hands tied behind their backs.

Once aloft, the Marine officer questioned the victim for about 15 minutes in Vietnamese. Twice or three times the man was led to the open door and threatened with expulsion unless he talked. The victim, who Osborn believes was selected deliberately for his lack of knowledge, was, finally seized at the officer's orders by two of the Marine guards and thrown out.

"He screamed on the way down," Osborn recalled.

Then, he said, the suspect, cowering in a corner, acknowledged that he had been recruited by the Vietcong and that he had buried a weapons cache in his garden. Osborn said that this cache was later found.

In late April, 1968, Osborn said, the same officer, now a captain, invited him along for a similar ride. The intelligence agent, then an enlisted man, fourth grade, could not remember as many details of this incident. But he said that, once again a man he thought had no knowledge was pushed from the helicopter to frighten a genuine suspect into talking.

Osborn also told of seeking out a Central Intelligence Agency official in Danang to supply him with political information in exchange for extra amounts of expense money to pay agents. Osborn identified the CIA official as Foster Phipps, whose "cover" title was coordinator, Combined Studies Division. The Army veteran said that he received "wads of piasters," perhaps several hundred thousands, under this arrangement.

Osborn was discharged in October, 1969, with a Bronze Star medal. He said he has several times visited the CIA headquarters in Langley, Va., to supply information to a friend he had known at Danang. Last spring, he said, this friend proposed that the CIA subsidize his graduate studies and then enroll him in the agency.

Osborn declined. He said: "I waited maybe a year (after leaving Vietnam) to get my head on straight. I didn't have any real guilt hangups there."

But back home, he continued, he decided:

"These things are wrong. America has no place in Vietnam. What little good we do is outdone ten times by the bad. I'm a Christian. I'd like to neutralize what we were doing in Southeast Asia."

This, he said, led him to speak out.

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The World

Both Sides In Vietnam Spy but North Does It Better

SAIGON — "Late one winter night [in North Vietnam] aspirant Hoang Ngo Ban received the order to lead a team to quickly hunt down a spy-commando group that had just infiltrated. In spite of the piercing cold wind, everybody was enthusiastic. They eagerly carried their weapons as they marched.

"When Ban detected enemy footprints near a valley, he assigned a comrade to come close to the enemy assembly area. A remote shot resounded. The enemies, thought they were being attacked by surprise so they ran in panic. One of them carried a radio set and sneaked through the dense jungle.

"Ban saw him and raised his weapon to shoot the lackey, but he thought it would be better to capture him, so he dashed after him. The enemy noticed that Ban was small and thin. He underestimated Ban's strength and stopped to fight back . . . Ban bravely threw him to the ground, tied him up . . . then continued to hunt the enemy with his team. By the time the operation was completed, Ban's team had captured and killed a number of the enemy, and had seized all their weapons and radio equipment."

And thus, according to this North Vietnamese article last year, Ban became a Hanoi hero. He had met the spies and saboteurs from the South and conquered them. It was bad news for Saigon, if in fact it all happened. But it would not have been a surprise. When it comes to spying and sabotage, South Vietnam clearly comes out on the short end.

Saigon's efforts to infiltrate into the Government of North Vietnam, to send its special forces into the jungles there, even to slip quietly into the Vietcong ranks in the South, have apparently amounted to exercises in frustration. A former intelligence officer here said last week that "we are essentially on the defensive in the field of intelligence and espionage."

Like others in Saigon, he expressed no great shock at the disclosure that the Central Intelligence Agency had compiled a report showing that the Vietnamese Communists had infiltrated more than 30,000 agents into the South Vietnamese Government. The only objections raised were over the accuracy of the figures.

The report said the largest segment of agents were 20,000 operating within the South Vietnamese military to undermine morale and effectiveness; 7,000 throughout all levels of the police, armed forces and civilian administration, principally for espionage, and a network of 3,000 within Saigon's intelligence units, including the Central Intelligence Office, the South Vietnamese C.I.A.

President Nguyen Van Thieu, one of whose own assistants was jailed last year as a spy, called the report exaggerated and added that, if it were true, his Government would have fallen long ago.

Unhappy Officials

Government officials, nevertheless, were clearly unhappy over the report, which raised questions about Saigon's ability to survive once American troops leave. Censors ordered references to the report deleted from Saigon newspapers, though some reached the streets before the orders went out.

"In our society it seems rather easy for them to blend into the system," said one Government official. "We do the best we can to track them down. We have our counter-espionage agencies. But it is clearly more difficult for us to do the same up North. We rely on other methods for information."

The other methods used with erratic results by South Vietnamese and Americans to determine Communist strategy include extensive interviews with defectors from the Vietcong and close study of the documents captured in battle. United States reconnaissance missions over North Vietnam also help in tracking the movement of enemy troops and materiel inside North Vietnam and the southern portions of Laos.

Apart from trying to find the agents within the ranks of Government and the military, the South Vietnamese, with American help, also attempt to root out the Vietcong in the countryside under the so-called Phoenix Program, which has been far from a roaring success. Some American advisers report, for example, that villagers are unwilling to inform on known Communists because in many cases they are relatives or friends. Saigon also offers rewards for capturing and killing Vietcong, posting wanted signs of known suspects, reminiscent of the F.B.I. signs in American post offices.

The South Vietnamese, however, have tried a variety of schemes. A few years ago they began an intensive effort to send men on special missions to North Vietnam after a vigorous training program that included lessons on surviving on tree roots and insects. They were mostly North Vietnamese refugees dropped in areas of their former homes. Many succeeded in making several such missions, but many more were either captured or killed. Generally, it was believed that the missions were not very effective and they dwindled away.

—ALVIN SHUSTER

CARL T. ROWAN

'Vietnamization' a Massive Failure

It is terribly painful for the Nixon administration to have the public learn of that Central Intelligence Agency memorandum warning that some 30,000 Communists have infiltrated the government and military forces of South Vietnam.

For that makes a Communist takeover look imminent once the U.S. withdraws. And it puts the lie to all the bold speeches about how well "Vietnamization" has worked.

Anyone who has spent any time dealing with this wretched war (and I have been going to Vietnam since 1955) must conclude that Vietnamization is just a nice cloak for U.S. withdrawal from what even President Nixon has recognized to be an unwinnable nightmare.

To withdraw in a defeat cloaked with bold rhetoric must stick in the craw of Nixon, an old Communist fighter who as recently as April 30, 1970, boasted that he "would rather be a one-term President than to be a two-term President at the cost of seeing America become a second-rate power and see this nation accept the first defeat in its proud 190-year history."

But let us be honest enough to admit that no President of any party is going to admit to defeat, or that he promulgated policies certifying that 50,000 American soldiers died in a lost cause.

It is to Nixon's credit that he

and that he is winding down recognized a hopeless situation the war. The blame for the war is not Nixon's to any great personal degree, and if he can use rhetoric to minimize the political damage of withdrawal, let him have that consolation.

But the American people had better start steeling themselves to the realities.

Despite official efforts to pooh-pooh the CIA report as overly pessimistic, other recent evidence suggests that the CIA is doing what presidents had better wish all their ambassadors and advisers would do: Tell the truth, even when it hurts.

A few days ago in Saigon, U.S. officials released captured Communist documents that showed that North Vietnamese units in Cambodia had at least four days' warning that a South Vietnamese attack was coming. But they had no warning of the strike into Cambodia by U.S. troops.

This is only one of hundreds of times that Communist agents or sympathizers in the top levels of the Saigon government and military have tipped off the enemy on impending military actions.

One looks at the number of political prisoners jailed by the South Vietnamese government, at the repressive measures against the press or certain Buddhist groups, and it becomes all too apparent that

the Thieu-Ky government is not riding the crest of a popular movement.

And when you consider the effort exerted by the Nixon administration to keep Vice President Ky from visiting Washington for the recent Victory Rally, it is apparent that the Saigon government is hardly held in the highest of esteem by its allies.

Small wonder, then, that Hanoi can infiltrate agents by the thousands into the Saigon government while our side can barely squeeze a corporal's guard of agents and informers into North Vietnam or the ranks of the Viet Cong.

I do not make these observations with any pleasure, for I was convinced long ago that the Viet Cong began murderous cut-throat terrorism at the behest of an aggressor North Vietnam government.

But the tragedy seems to be that leaders in the South would not, or could not, fight for survival without tying themselves to white Westerners who bore the taint of imperialism. They could not or would not establish rapport with the masses.

So the terrible price will be a hopeless withdrawal of the United States and the slow encroachment of a Communist regime that will subject South Vietnam to an era of bloody revenge and terrible, terrible sorrow.

Vietnam

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THE WASHINGTON POST

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CIA Says Reds Infiltrate South Viet Government

An analysis circulated by the Central Intelligence Agency last May to ranking government officials said the South Vietnamese government has been infiltrated by tens of thousands of Communist agents.

Informed administration officials confirmed yesterday the substance of a New York Times story which was based on "details of the top secret study" and placed the number of Communist agents at 30,000.

The Times said the analysis found the extent of infiltration into the South Vietnamese armed forces, police and intelligence apparatus to be so great as to raise questions about the long-term viability of the Saigon government, especially as more American troops are withdrawn.

While acknowledging that Communist infiltration into the South Vietnamese government is a troublesome problem, government officials said the May analysis, in all likelihood, overstated the situation.

'Raw Intelligence'

Sources said the report was in the nature of a "raw intelligence analysis" prepared by a "small office" in the CIA from actual security cases (some of them already publicized), information gleaned by interrogating prisoners, plus captured Communist documents.

The analysis, they said, does not represent the considered judgment of the combined U.S. intelligence agencies.

Referring to the figure of more than 30,000 agents, one high-ranking official said, "If we had such specific information, obviously we would do something about it."

There is no doubt, sources said, that there are Vietcong supporters and agents inside the Saigon government. However, these officials noted that in the Vietnamese kind of political-military struggle, there can be many gradations of agents, sympathizers, fellow travelers, and individuals merely intimidated into say-

ing they will side with the Vietcong if they achieve victory.

Pacification Program

According to the Times, President Nixon has read a summary of the analysis but believes it to be unduly pessimistic because of other reports he has received about the pacification program, the results of last May's incursions into Cambodia and the improved performance of the South Vietnamese army.

The CIA analysis reportedly asserts that the Communists decided in early 1969 to shift their long-range plans from concerted military activity to political subversion. It was hoped, the analysis said, that Communists would be in position to undermine the South Vietnamese government as American troops were removed from the scene.

The analysis, the Times said, concluded that the Communists had a goal of 50,000 agents with the Saigon government infrastructure—a goal probably not reached by the end of 1969.

Cannot Match

These agents, who represent an intelligence system the United States and South Vietnam cannot match, are to be distinguished from the tens of thousands of Vietcong sympathizers elsewhere in South Vietnamese life, the analysis reportedly states.

Spokesmen for the CIA and the State Department refused to comment about the disclosure of the analysis. Privately, some officials expressed concern about the apparent leak, in breach of security regulations, of a highly secret government document.

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